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SUBJECT: GOI REQUESTS HELP TO CONVENE DISPLACED IRAQIS  
WORKING GROUP

REF: A. BAGHDAD 1894

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IC. AMMAN 2502

ID. BAGHDAD 1910

Classified By: Classified by Political Counselor Margaret Scobey for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

1, (C) Summary: The Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary, Dr. Mohammad Hamoud, requested USG assistance in getting the government of Jordan to convene the neighbors' working group on displaced Iraqis. The MFA had hoped that this working group would meet before June 15. According to Hamoud, the GOI is willing to invest on the education of Iraqis in Jordan and Syria and looks forward to an opportunity discuss with these two governments where and how Iraqi support should be applied. This willingness, he added, is currently frustrated by the Jordanian government's procrastination on setting a date to host in Amman this working group meeting. The MFA Undersecretary recognizes that the financial cost of educating thousands of Iraqi children is substantial and will require --in addition to Iraq's own contribution-- the support of donors' countries and for this reason would welcome the participation of the USG as an observer in the meetings of this working group. The Department may want to consider approaching the government of Jordan to encourage it to convene this working group. End summary.

Jordanian procrastination

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I2. (C) Embassy Refugee Coordinator (RefCoord) met on June 11 with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs Undersecretary, Mohammed Hamoud, to discuss assistance for Iraqi refugees in Jordan and Syria. Hamoud used the occasion to request USG help in eliciting the cooperation of Jordan to convene the working group on displaced Iraqis. (Note: The GOI prefers to refer to Iraqis in the region as displaced Iraqis, rather than refugees. The establishment of the working group --along with that of working groups on energy and security-- was agreed to during the March 10 neighbors' conference in Baghdad and reaffirmed during the May 4 Sharm el-Sheikh follow-up. However, none of the groups have met yet. See reftel A. End note.) Hamoud explained that Foreign Minister Zebari had recently spoken on the phone with his Jordanian counterpart and told him that, if Jordan did not want to host the meeting, it should say so and the GOI would look for an alternative location. The Jordanian Foreign Minister, Hamoud said, maintained that the government of Jordan (GOJ) will convene the meeting, adding that the Jordanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs was just waiting for other GOJ agencies to acquiesce to a date. (Note: Hamoud speculated that the Jordanian intelligence agency may be causing the delay. End note). Hamoud noted that the GOI had been responsive to the Jordanian request of producing a draft paper on issues for discussion, and had expected the GOJ to respond with setting

a date, hopefully before June 15, for a meeting (Note: The draft paper was sent to PRM/ANE. End note). If the meeting does not take place before June 15, Hamoud stated that the next opportunity for him to participate would be the last week of June, as he was traveling to Geneva and Brussels for talks with the UN Compensation Commission on Iraq and with the European Union next week. (Note: Hamoud is the point of contact on refugee issues at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the GOI lead for the working group on displaced Iraqis. End note.) The Iraqi MFA undersecretary welcomed the US participation as an observer in the working group's meetings.

Burden-sharing

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¶3. (C) Hamoud stated that Prime Minister Maliki had not decided where and how to apply the USD 25 million for displaced Iraqis that the GOI pledged in Geneva on April 17 (reftel B). Face to face meetings with Jordanian and Syrian officials, he added, would help the GOI make a decision. Hamoud agreed that getting Iraqi children into school in Jordan and Syria was a priority. To address the situation in Syria, he said, the GOI was contemplating making a contribution to the Iraqi Red Crescent Society for the establishment of schools specifically for Iraqi children. Hamoud was aware that the GOJ prefers the integration of Iraqi children in the Jordanian educational system, and hoped that the GOJ would change its policy of only allowing Iraqi children who are legal residents to register in the schools (Note: Hamoud did not seem aware of the GOJ announcement to allow all children in Jordan to register in school, reported in reftel C. End note.) Hamoud said that the GOI would welcome a UNHCR appeal for the education of externally displaced Iraqi children. He thought that the GOI could

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contribute to such an appeal in order to encourage donors to follow suit. In terms of appealing to countries other than traditional Western donors, Hamoud lamented that the Gulf states had traditionally followed Saudi Arabia's lead, and that the Saudis have not been very generous in assisting Iraq. Hamoud thought that the Saudi government does not want democracy to flourish in the region, nor is it happy with a Shia government in Iraq. Hamoud expressed gratitude for the ongoing USG efforts and contributions to the education of externally displaced Iraqi children.

Humanitarian attaches

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¶4. (C) Hamoud confirmed that the MFA had agreed to place humanitarian attaches at Embassies in the region (reftel D). These attaches would come from the Iraqi Ministry of Displacement and Migration (MODM). He did not think, however, that these new positions should be funded by the USD 25 million pledge, noting that this money should go to needy displaced Iraqis, not to the bureaucracy. Hamoud characterized the MFA's acceptance of attaches as a compromise with MODM, which had wanted to establish its own offices in the region. (Note: Hamoud was critical of MODM's leadership, stating that MODM's push for its own offices was motivated by the Minister of Displacement wish to leave for Teheran to head such an office there, and by his deputy's desire to do the same in Amman. End note.)

Comment

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¶5. (C) Dr. Hamoud is a veteran diplomat and a constructive interlocutor on refugee issues. His continued involvement in the matter could lead to a more effective GOI engagement with governments in the region hosting large numbers of Iraqis. However, his many responsibilities as the MFA's equivalent of a second deputy minister pull him in many directions. The failure of the GOJ to convene the displaced Iraqis working

group before June 15 constitutes a missed opportunity to press forward with the USG goal of facilitating the scholarization of as many Iraqi refugee children as possible.

The Department may want to consider approaching the GOJ to encourage it to respond promptly to the GOI's request to host --hopefully before the end of June-- the first meeting of the working group. End comment.

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